CHAPTER III

THE AGRICULTURAL CENTER

The mountainous character of the Kawasaka region, the steep peaks and gorges, acts to limit the amount of arable land. It would be difficult to estimate the actual extent of the land which might be brought under cultivation, but it could only be a smaller part of the entire area. Wide, level stretches of land are to be found, such as the plains about Betsu or Ipsen, but many other holdings are no more than strips cut into hillsides or cliffs. On the other hand, in the absence of mineral exploitation or industry, a high percentage, perhaps 80%, of the population is directly engaged in agriculture or animal husbandry, and the production wealth of the district is almost wholly derived from these two pursuits.

Game is not abundant, and hunting and fishing cannot be said to add any important supplement to the food supply. In the town of Kawasaka itself there are four professional fishermen and a hunter, but their activities are seasonal, and they have additional employment. Ibex, the long-horned mountain goat, is hunted chiefly for sport, and strong-smelling skins and horns are exhibited as trophies by local businessmen. In accordance with Quranic prescription, if such game is to be eaten, it must be bled while still "alive," after having been brought down with a rifle. The local

such house was that in the neighborhood of 378 Kisoga 330
[498]
owner a thousand cowries dollars. With such capital 342
on his survived, building is a serious business and [411]
obligations between owner and mason appear frequently
before the judge. Poorer townspeople with a flair for
the work sometimes build their own simple homes, but
anything larger requires the specialist. In such smaller [476]
constructions Rwanda seems to have little "communism,"
for, while the neighbors may lend a hand, there is no
tradition which requires the aid of others.

Some of the important details of house construction 339
will be found in the succeeding section. There is one
person in the town who devotes himself to the manufacture
of sun-bricks and the supply of large pieces of carved
stone, these last used for thresholds, courtyards, steps,
and the like. The moistened soil for bricks is mixed with
chaff and molded with a wooden form. The shaped bricks
are laid out in rows in the sun to dry, and, when harvested,
are ready for construction. No fire-cured bricks are
manufactured in the town. There is no special place for
brick-making, and in 1951 an empty lot near the house of
Isma'il Bag was used for this purpose. Similarly, there 324
is no particular stone-quarry for the district, and any [316]
convenient outcrop may be used. The people of the dis-
trict are not skilled in stonecarving, and most pieces,
usually of limestone, are only crudely roughed into flat,
irregular slabs. Sun-brick, because it is more easily 333